

A Brief History of the Solar Rollers

In **1977** - the Rollers formed to have a presence at the Toward Tomorrow Fair at UMass Amherst.

In **1978** - June 23rd - about 40 - 50 Solar Rollers rode from Leverett Friends Meeting to Vernon, VT (calling for the shutdown of VT Yankee) and then rode across southern NH, stopping for potlucks in towns all along the way, to "occupy" the site of planned construction of the twin Seabrook Nuclear Reactor.

1978 - July - August 1978, about 40 - 50 Solar Rollers rode from Montague, MA to Golden, Colorado, to join the Rocky Flats Truth Force and Daniel Ellsberg in civil disobedience on the railroad tracks, calling for the immediate shut down and cleanup of the Rockwell Int. nuclear weapons facility at Rocky Flats. (Raided by the FBI in 1989, shut down in 1992 after two major fires and decades of leaking radioactive waste spread plutonium across wide areas of Colorado.)

1979 – late April - early May - in the wake of the March 28th Three Mile Island Unit II meltdown in Harrisburg, PA, six Solar Rollers rode from Greenfield MA to Washington DC to join 65,000 protestors at the MUSE May 6th safe energy rally on the Capitol Steps.

A short ride from Greenfield to Vermont Yankee took place that year, calling for the immediate shut-down of Vermont Yankee.

1981, the Rollers rode for five weeks around the state of Vermont, to join up with the VT American Friends Service Committee walk from Washington (VT) to Moscow (VT) calling for a nuclear weapons freeze, and an end to the arms race. The Rollers handed out fliers in support of shutting down Vermont Yankee, including one flier printed up specifically to leave at dairy farms around the state, detailing the threat of Strontium-90 - a manmade carcinogen found in the soil around VT Yankee - to the dairy industry, and drawing the connection once again between the civilian and military uses of nuclear power.

In **1988**, the Rollers rode from Yankee Rowe to the Pilgrim nuclear reactor in Plymouth in support of a lopsided statewide referendum campaign to shut down those two nukes. (Plymouth closed in Using rate payer dollars to defend their interests, the utilities that owned the two Massachusetts nukes outspent the anti-nuclear advocates by a huge margin, throwing millions of dollars into an advertising blitz. After a long series of accidents, the Pilgrim reactor was shut down permanently in 2019 – the plans for its ultimate decommissioning are fiercely contested in towns around Plymouth to this date, with the threatened release of millions of gallons of radioactive wastewater into Cape Cod Bay a particular concern.

In **1989**, in early June, the Rollers rode from Greenfield to Seabrook, NH, to join a large demonstration calling for the immediate shut down of that plant.

Also in June of that year, the Rollers rode from Greenfield to Rowe, sitting in at the gates of Yankee Atomic and calling for the immediate shut down of that nuke, at that time the oldest commercial reactor and the only one in the country built entirely above ground, with its radioactive core suspended in a steel pressure vessel on stilts above the Deerfield River. The six Solar Rollers were arrested for trespassing and the trial in Greenfield Superior Court the following year resulted in the jury's not guilty verdict, following pro se testimony of the dangers of nuclear power. (Yankee Rowe was struck by lightning in 1991, causing a fire and shortly thereafter permanent closure of the reactor.)

2008 – 2014 The Rollers kept up their advocacy for shutting down Vermont Yankee with four successive rides, until the nuke was permanently closed in 2014. Over those years they handed out tens of thousands of fliers, along rural roads and in small towns and cities, from the Massachusetts border all the way up to Canada. The Rollers estimated that by the end of their fifth and final tour of Vermont, they had handed out enough fliers to reach approximately one out of every ten Vermonters - all calling for the shutdown of VY.

When the Vermont Senate finally voted 26 - 4 in favor of closing Vermont Yankee on Feb 26, 2010, the Rollers took pride in noting that the conservative Democratic state senators from rural Franklin County all voted in favor of shutting it down. The Rollers had canvassed these rural districts for years, areas where door to door canvassing is impractical due to the great distance between houses. The Rollers technique of leaving fliers in the newspaper tubes (without stopping or getting off their bikes) and behind the flags of mail boxes along rural routes was developed on the way from Seabrook to Rocky Flats in 1978, and became one of the hallmarks of the group's activism. Seabrook Unit I (Unit II was never built) remains in operation, despite active decay of the concrete foundation. Along with Millstone Units II and III in Waterford, CT – Seabrook is the last of three operating nuclear reactors in the Northeast.